



File Code: 1950

Date: June 15, 2015

Dear Planning Participant:

I would like to provide you with an update on the Lowell WUI project, located on the Moose Creek Ranger District. The purpose and need for the project, as communicated in the October 2014 scoping letter, is to improve forest health and reduce hazardous fuels within designated Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) lands. We initially planned to conduct an Environmental Assessment using the Title I provisions of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) for fuel reduction activities on approximately 300 acres within the Community Protection Zone of Lowell, Idaho. We have since determined that this proposal may be categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as it fits within a category listed in Section 603 of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. 6591b), which permits projects designed to reduce the risk or extent of, or increase the resilience to, insect or disease infestation in areas designated by the Secretary of Agriculture under Section 602. The Lowell WUI project is located within a designated area. Use of the Categorical Exclusion (CE) supports the proposed actions in the purpose and need.

This project was first introduced at a community meeting held at the Fenn Ranger Station on May 22, 2014. Approximately 15 community members attended and were supportive of the project. Several even requested that the project size be increased. An additional community meeting to discuss the project was held on September 3, 2014. Approximately 20 people attended and again expressed support for the project. The Forest published a news release on September 9, 2014 announcing a community meeting on September 17th to discuss the proposal and solicit input towards the project prior to scoping. Approximately 15 people attended. The Forest gave a power point presentation about the project and answered questions and received comments towards the proposal. There were no issues or concerns brought up at the meeting and everyone in attendance was supportive of the project. Scoping was conducted in late 2014. Comments received in response to scoping are being considered by the interdisciplinary team as they further develop this project using the CE.

This project is anticipated to have a decision by September 2015. We invite you to join us for a public meeting on July 15, 2015 at the Fenn Ranger Station Visitor Center at 6:30 pm to gather any additional information prior to the decision. More information regarding the Insect & Disease Categorical Exclusion, as authorized under Section 603 of HFRA Title VI (Farm Bill CE) can be found at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/farmbill/areadesignations.shtml>



I appreciate your interest and engagement in this project. If you have any concerns or questions regarding the project that were not communicated during one of the public meetings or scoping, please direct them to the Project Team Leader, Amy Powers, at 208-926-6431. Additional information about the project can be found at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/nezperceclearwater/landmanagement/projects> (scroll down and click on the Lowell WUI project).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe Hudson", followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Joe Hudson
Moose Creek District Ranger
Enclosure: map

Lowell WUI Project
Moose Creek / Lochsa RDs
Nez Perce - Clearwater Forests
Proposed Fuel Break Areas



